

The Role of Organizational Innovativeness in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Public Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract: Empirical evidences from the extant literature reveals that if public tertiary institutions are to survive and achieve long-run viability in this contemporary era, they must be effective. Management argued that internal organizational competencies are safer in creating organizational competitive advantages. One of the internal organizational competencies is organizational innovativeness (ability of organizations to innovate). Organizational innovativeness has been penciled as an important tool for improving the effectiveness of tertiary institutions. The current business environment that tertiary institutions are can best be describe as dynamic, turbulent as well as unpredictable. Their success largely depends on their ability to strategically innovate and timely respond to the rapidly changing environment. The aim of this paper is to discuss the correlations between organizational innovativeness and effectiveness of public tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Thus, the paper looks at the two types of innovations (technical innovation and administrative innovation) and how they could be employed by the Nigerian tertiary institutions in order to enhance their effectiveness.

Key words: competitive advantage, competition, performance

1. Introduction

Organizational effectiveness as a panacea for successful organization and it is a common target for all organizations precisely in this current era of dramatic change and cut-throat competition. Organizational effectiveness focuses on successful performances to attain organizational goal and objective (Kraipetch et al., 2013). Eddy (1981) concurred that organizational effectiveness is the degree of success in implementing what are pre-decided. Organizational effectiveness provides useful hints for monitoring, control, improvement, and maximization improvement efforts towards alignment of organizational goals and objectives (Drucker, 1985). Public tertiary institutions effectiveness implies the ability of the institutions to access and attract resources that will subsequently lead them to achievement of their goals (McLuhan, 2006). Public tertiary institutions effectiveness could be expected from several dimensions. These dimensions include increase of students enrolment, increases of student pass rate, rising of qualitative research outputs, among others. Organizational innovativeness in this context refers to the capability of public tertiary institutions in Nigeria to put in new technologies, opinions, or products into practice for better performance (Lin, 2006). Innovation assists tertiary institutions to grow and maintain their roles in changes as well as

helping them to initiate cooperation of researchers that can bridge the gap between researches, training and innovation (Ghorchian & Salehi, 2005). Adoption of new idea in an public tertiary institutions, regardless of time of its adoption, is expected to result in an organizational change that might affect the organizational effectiveness (Damanpour & Evan, 1984).

Gusau (2008) explain that increasing changes in Nigerian economy, technology and knowledge transfer coupled with increasing customer demand and awareness, requires Nigerian public universities, colleges of education, polytechnic and monotechnics to instill organizational effectiveness on their agendas in order to gain more competitive advantage.

2. Effectiveness in Nigerian Public Tertiary Institutions

Tertiary institutions effectiveness remains as a significant pointer to show the direction, position, and future of the institutions. Evaluating the effectiveness of tertiary institutions is a widespread and ongoing activity and several scholars and practitioners are in agreement that it the necessary condition for tertiary institutions success and survival (Vinitwatanakhun, 1998). The Nigerian government in recent years has recognized the essentiality of assessing organizational effectiveness within the public tertiary

institutions in the country. Three bodies were saddled with this responsibility; Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) (Yusuf *et al.* 2014). The Nigerian central government established these bodies in order to monitor the activities of the institutions for effectiveness. Because it is, believe that the benefits of organizational effectiveness will leads to effective cooperation in the future (Vinitwatanakhun, 1998). But despite these regulatory bodies, the effectiveness of Nigerian tertiary institutions is still far from what is being expected (Kolo, 2016). The reason for this unhealthy situation according to Obanya (2016) is lack of innovation that leads to the continue duplication of reforms.

One of the top competitive challenges facing the Nigerian tertiary institutions due to lack innovativeness is the outflow of Nigerian students abroad. According to Deji-Folutile (2014), the former Nigerian central governor, Malam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi lamenting that there are about 71,000 Nigerian students in Ghana paying almost a billion US dollars annually. Furthermore, Exams Ethics International, a non- governmental organization had confirmed that the expenses of Nigerian students abroad are more than NGN1.5 trillion annually (Nigeria Spends, 2014). The issue of effectiveness in Nigerian tertiary institutions has continued to attract the attention of government and the public (Okoro & Okoro, 2014).

3. The Concept of Organizational Innovativeness

According to Hurley and Hult (1998), organizational innovativeness is the thought of openness to new ideas as a characteristic of a firm's culture. Thus, innovativeness is a gauge of an organization's orientation toward innovation. There are requisites to organizational innovativeness as argued Hurley and Hult (1998). These organizational characteristics include organizational culture, such as learning, participative decision-making, collaboration and support, and power sharing etc. The capacity to innovate is a term firstly used by Burns and Stalker (1961), as the organizational ability to adopt or implement new ideas, processes, or products successfully. Tertiary institutions that have a greater ability to innovate "are able to develop a competitive advantage and achieve higher levels of performance" Hurley and Hult (1998).

Organizational innovativeness could be established through individual employees, teams and management, and it enables the creation of an innovative culture, the overall internal openness to new ideas and innovation in the organization. Individual innovativeness can be regarded as "a normally distributed underlying personality which may be interpreted as a willingness to change" (Hurt *et al.*, 1977). On the other hand, Team innovativeness is the team's change adaptability (Lovelace et al., 2001). It is not merely a total of innovative individuals, but a synergy supported by the group dynamics. Whilst managerial innovativeness reveals management's willingness to change and commitment to promote new ways of doing things, as well as its keenness in encourage new ideas (Rainey, 1999). Behavioural innovativeness is essential factor that underscores innovative outcomes. Innovative culture serves as a vehicle of innovations, while lack of it in an organization acts as blocker of innovations (Wang & Ahmed, 2004).

4. Types of organizational innovativeness

Innovativeness in tertiary institution could be categorized into two types; administrative innovation and technical innovation (Damanpour & Evan, 1984). These are the most widely used in conceptualizing and operationalization of innovation (Damanpour, 1987; Jaskyte, 2002; Obenchain, 2002). Damanpour, Walker, and Avellaneda (2009, p.655) defined administrative innovations refers to changes in the organization's structure, processes, administrative systems, and knowledge use in performing the work of management, and managerial skills that enable an organization to function and succeed by using its resources effectively". On the other hand, technical innovation refers to the execution of a service, a program, or a product that is new to the organizational practice (Jaskyte, 2011). Again, technical innovation lies on the unprecedented new technological content presented in the newly introduced products or the process that uses new gadgets of the technological development (Wang & Ahmad, 2004).

5. Role of Administrative and Technical Innovation in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Administrative innovation is the main component of organizational innovation (Subramanian and Nilakanta, 1996).

Administrative innovation potentially promotes work redesign and work systems, skills enhancement, management systems, and changes in incentives (Yamin *et al.*, 1997). Essentially, it becomes a key determinant of competitive advantage in tertiary institutions. Administrative innovations could be in the form of restructuring of organizational structures, management practices, administrative systems, processes, and techniques that may perhaps create value for the organization (Kimberly, 1981; Birkinshaw *et al.*, 2008). Further examples of administrative innovation that could be applied to Nigerian public tertiary institutions include the Total Quality Management (TQM), (Deming 1981) which allow the institutions to monitor and constantly improve on their service delivery. More so, Business Process Reengineering (BPR), (Hammer 1990) allows the institutions to quickly process information and timely response to both students and staff requests. Additionally, the New Public Management reform (Rainey 2009) is another alternative. This important technique can facilitate cooperation and collaboration between public tertiary institutions and privates for mutual benefits. Other administrative innovations available to the institutions are quality circle, 360-degree feedback, cost accounting, and divisional (M-form) structure. Administrative innovations are knowledge intensive. Due to the tacit nature of management practices especially in tertiary institutions, prospective adopters are expected to seek help from experts like consultants, professional, or other professionals in executing the innovation (Birkinshaw *et al.* 2006). In order to do so, the institutions should search for best practices from consultants and professionals (Mol and Birkinshaw, 2009).

Kuboni (2012) opined that technology innovation is a major driver behind change, and occasionally plays a vital role in innovations in learning design and delivery. There are enormous possibilities for superior and wider-spread change with the use of contemporary technological advancements, as well as with the execution of innovative educational programs. The task is to make sure that innovation plays a positive role in improving educational opportunities for billions of people who remain under-served in rapidly developing nations (Otara, 2012).

Over the last decades, technology innovation through digital mediums continue to become more popular in higher education (Robert *et al.*, 2014). With this development,

there is raising expectation that public tertiary institutions in Nigeria will accept and utilize, technological innovations in order to enhance the delivery of course content in conformity with the current Nigerian societal and future workforce demands. This happening had led to the formation and revision of policies that ought to consider the increasing presence of electronic devices and the use of these devices by tertiary institutions who strive to remain in contact with their students' realities in a digital world (Robert *et al.*, 2014).

Almost all public tertiary institutions in Nigeria are quite aware of the digital mediums as a segment of technological innovation. Nevertheless, they find it difficult to embrace the technologies for their activities. Below are some of the technologies that the institutions need to embrace for the betterment of students and faculty members alike. Some of these technologies are rooted in the social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumbler, Desire MySpace, or the institution's preferred social media forum). More available options include the use of information technology (smartphones, laptops, tablets, online mail and unrestricted wifi for internet browsing), as well as computing practice, and use of institutional computers. These technological innovations are typically rewarding to members of the college/university community (Blake, 2013). Some common technologies and how use in tertiary institutions as adopted from Robert *et al.*, (2014).

Table 1: Some popular technological innovations available to tertiary institutions

| Typology of Technology | Popular Uses |
|---|--|
| Hardware: Laptops and Tablets | (1) Research of course content and material. (2) Facilitate exercise, drills and practice to reinforce course content. (3) Allow interaction out of the classroom setting. (4) It makes access to productivity and courseware possible for students |
| Hardware (Click): Audience Response Device | (1) It permits students to responds to each other question. (2) It is good tool for promoting students participation in group that is large |
| Software: Virtual Learning Environment System. Eg. | (1) It is popularly used for online instructions and learning. (2) Allow storage of course contents for students access. (3) This medium is an electronic |

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| Hardwares: Laptops and Tablets | (1) Research of course content and material. (2) Facilitate exercise, drills and practice to reinforce course content. (3) Allow interaction out of the classroom setting. (4) It makes access to productivity and courseware possible for students |
| WebCT, Desire2Learn | forum that allows the students to submit their assignment online. (4) Synchronize and synchronize online discussions. |
| Hardware: Interactive Whiteboards | (1) It provides access for electronic contents for students. (2) Aid manipulation of electronic contents on interactive board. |

6. CONCLUSION

Damanpour *et al.* (2009) warned that there is a negative relationship between adopting one definite category of innovation over time and performance. In another word, the adoptions of both administrative and technical innovations are of equal priority. In tertiary educational context, a study conducted by Liaw, Huang, and Chen (2007) suggest that suitable and available new administrative and technical resource positively support students' satisfaction towards learning. More so, Roberts and Amit (2003) posited that senior executives as well as managers should consider all types of innovation as tool quite required in order to attain and improve organizational effectiveness. Innovation is hypothesis to be an indispensable for realizing performance objectives in tertiary institutions. Along this line, Chen, Liu, and Wu (2009) found that performance of organization is positively related to its technical and administrative innovations. They opined that organizations should enhance both their administrative and technical innovations. For tertiary institutions to implement technical innovation, while doing away with administrative innovation, it will be hard for them to realize the effect of the technical innovation (Ashraf *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, it very imperative for public tertiary institutions in Nigeria to embrace both administrative and technical innovations simultaneously. This will assist them in achieving meaningful organizational effectiveness. Therefore,

managers and administrators in the institutions should be continuously ready and open to new ideas, processes, and products. This is very essential because quite number of public non-profits in developing countries much often consider innovation is a risky and expensive effort. Therefore, the resent study suggests that public tertiary institutions in Nigeria should be courageous and continue to embrace innovation for the betterment and effectiveness of the institutions.

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